

**Association of Montana Floodplain Managers, Inc.**

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Senator Kim Gillan, Chair,
Senate Local Government Committee
Montana Senate
PO Box 200500, Helena, MT 59620-0500.

February 5, 2007

Re: Senate Bill No. 345

Dear Senator Gillan,

On behalf of the Association of Montana Floodplain Managers, I urge the Senate Local Government Committee to support Senate Bill No. 345. Development along our stream and river corridors is increasing at an alarming rate, and the impacts of such development affect many important aspects of life for Montanans. If riverfront development continues, virtually unchecked and unrestrained, it will adversely impact Montana's natural and biological resources; the quality of life that is central to our State's growth and economic development; and most importantly, public health and safety.

The Association of Montana Floodplain Managers supports the responsible management of Montana's Floodplains through communication, cooperation, and education. We encourage the legislature to learn the lessons from other states that have allowed riverfront development without due consideration of the potential consequences. We need only look at the 1976 Big Thompson Canyon flood in Colorado that killed 144 residents and returned the landscape to its primordial conditions; or the 1985 floods in South Dakota's Black Hills that killed 237 people, injured 3,057 people, and resulted in over \$160 million in damages. We can avoid similar tragedies here.

Floodplain administrators only have jurisdiction over those floodplains that have been identified and mapped by FEMA or DNRC, amounting to a very small portion of the State's rivers and streams. The setbacks authorized by the proposed legislation compliment the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and substantially mitigate flood hazards by accounting for the flood prone lands that are not yet delineated or are inadequately mapped. The proposed legislation also ensures that people and property are "reasonably safe from flooding", as required by CFR 60.3, a major tenet of the NFIP.

Most floodplain administrators are employed by local governments, thus preservation of local control is very important to our organization. As such, we believe the proposed legislation preserves the opportunity for local governments to modify setbacks to address their particular circumstances. Watercourse setbacks are a viable tool to substantially protect public health and safety, and human life from flood hazards. We urge your support of Senate Bill 345.

Sincerely,

Sean O'Callaghan, CFM, Chair
Association of Montana Floodplain Managers

CC: Senator Hawks

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